



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 7

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Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Pages write bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Topics for social bills included academic requirements for high school athletes, gang violence, cyberbullying, high school start times, availability of foster homes, and childhood obesity.



Academics the priority for student athletes



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Rachel Cropper introduced Senate Bill 7373, which addresses the issue of academic requirements for student athletes. “The bill is a good one because it will set uniform standards for athletes in all state public school sports programs,” said Sen. Cropper. Currently, some high school athletes are not on pace to graduate, yet they are still allowed to play. This is because different school districts have different academic requirements for eligibility. Some allow an athlete to fail one subject; some allow failure of two subjects; others require a passing grade point average. If the bill becomes law, no school may allow a student to play sports who is failing any class. Students will be allowed to practice with the team, but bi-monthly grade checks will determine eligibility to play in games.

Brain malformation bill introduced

Olympia – Senate Bill 7842 was introduced yesterday by Senator Daniel Crawford. “This bill addresses the issue of Chiari malformation and will raise the general public’s awareness of this condition,” said Sen. Crawford. Chiari malformation is a brain abnormality that can result in facial weakness, breathing difficulties, deafness and even paralysis. One in every 1,000 infants is born with some level of the condition. If the bill becomes law, the Legislature will establish Chiari Awareness Month to educate people on this rare disease.

Bill changes youth sentencing

Olympia – House Bill 1340 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Jeffrey Huschka and Charles Nijel Wilson. “This bill addresses the issue of juveniles being charged as adults and will eliminate the harm being done to youthful offenders in state prisons,” said Rep. Huschka. The legislation was created to prevent

youths being sent to prison from getting raped, beaten, or attacked with weapons by fellow inmates. All juveniles under the age of 16 must be sent to juvenile facilities or mental hospitals if they commit a major crime, according to the bill. “The suicide rate of children in adult jails is 7.7 times higher than youths in juvenile detention centers,” said Rep. Wilson. “We can’t allow this.”

Minors protected from smoking drivers

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Ciara Pape and Tina Patel introduced House Bill 1999, which addresses the issue of secondhand smoke in automobiles. “The bill is a good one because it will keep young children healthy and give people who do smoke an opportunity to quit smoking,” said Rep. Pape. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. Approximately 438,000 people die each year from the effects of smoking. When smoke is confined to a small space, like a car, the toxins from the cigarettes are 10 times higher than in the home. The bill makes it illegal to smoke in a car when minors up to the age of 16 are present and is a secondary infraction with a fine of \$100. After two years, the law becomes a primary offense.



Cuts/taxes only way to end state’s financial crisis

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Dane Litchfield, Tiger Paulsen, Andrew Nelson, Carew Giberson-Chen, Tyler Gustafson, Brandon Weinman, Madison Sartain, and Lisa Riddle regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We want to cause as little suffering as possible, but we

are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades,” said Rep. Weinman. Among the list of cuts offered were cutting government spending on goods and services by 25 percent and cutting government funding for the arts. “Many people would be very willing to donate and/or create art for public places without utilizing tax dollars to purchase it,” said Rep. Paulsen. “Over the next two years, the general public will suffer from involuntary cuts in services and goods, so it is only right that the government should sacrifice, as well. This will save the state \$200 million,” said Rep. Giberson-Chen. Although many legislators had made campaign promises not to raise taxes, the committee saw a need to make up for lost revenues by raising the tax on cigarettes and liquor by \$1, raising \$470 million. In addition, the lawmakers suggested a 10 percent tax on card rooms. “These establishments are currently not being taxed and this activity is something people do for entertainment,” said Rep. Riddle. “For that reason, it will not affect most people’s everyday life and it will contribute \$61 to help balance the budget.” Rep. Paulsen summed up the package in closing remarks. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now.”



More time to sleep in?

Olympia – House Bill 1529 was introduced yesterday by Representative Bryce Barlow. “This bill addresses the issue of high school start times and will improve academic achievement and student safety,” said Rep. Barlow. Many of today’s teenagers are not getting enough sleep and are facing academic failure and health problems. With Rep. Barlow’s plan, the state government would push back all high school start times to 8:30 a.m. at the earliest so teenagers can get the sleep they need and have a bright future. It is estimated that half of the 100,000 traffic accidents due to fatigue involve teenagers who are sleep deprived. “A teen’s biological clock is much different than an adult’s,” said Rep. Barlow. “Their bodies are wired to go to sleep later and wake later. It just makes sense to start school later for them.”





Mock committees debate, vote

Simulated committee hearings were held on Thursday. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

Deadly dog attacks on the rise



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Ashley Williams and Clara Vannice introduced Senate Bill 5263, which addresses the issue of dangerous dog attacks. “The bill is a good one because it will aid us in protecting our citizens

from potentially deadly canine injuries,” said Sen. Williams. There has been an increase in serious bites and even fatalities. Nearly 2 percent of the U.S. population (about 4.7 million people annually) sustain serious injuries due to dog bites, and one out of every six are severe enough to require medical attention. “Not only are these incidents of great concern, but they are also costly,” said Sen. Vannice. “Victims of these attacks suffer over \$1 billion in monetary losses every year and even that estimate may be low as other sources suggest the cost is closer to \$2 billion.” The Insurance Information Institute states that in 2002 dog bites cost insurers \$345.5 million and rose to \$356.2 million in 2007. This bill requires that all dogs posing a threat to the public be leashed and/or muzzled. Dogs who attack others must go through a rigorous training program and the owner is responsible for aiding the victim with medical expenses.

Reps drive drunks off the road

Olympia – House Bill 1500 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Patrick Hageman and Robert Hall. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving and will and keep the roads safer,” said Rep. Hall. The bill would include a raise in DUI fines, more jail time and special license plates for the convicted drivers, and sobriety checkpoints. “Of the 700 fatalities that occurred last year, 43 percent of the fatalities were caused by drunk drivers,” said Rep. Hageman. “We have got to get serious about stopping these dangerous drivers.”



Bill reduces hiker casualties

Olympia – Senate Bill 7622 was introduced yesterday by Senator Michael Pennacchi. “This bill addresses the issue of hiker safety and will completely separate hikers from hunters,” said Sen. Pennacchi. The bill is a result of a recent hunting accident where a 14-year-old boy mistook a hiker for a bear and fatally shot her. If enacted into law, hiking and hunting areas will be separated by bright colored tape around the perimeter of popular hiking trails. Also hikers will be required to wear bright colors not found in nature like neon orange. There will be a fine for hunters who shoot something within the perimeter of the tape.



Paper or reusable bag, anyone?

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Anna McCracken and Johanna Svensson introduced Senate Bill 5432, which addresses the issue of plastic-petroleum based bag pollution. “The bill is a good one because it prompts Washington state citizens to move in the right direction in terms of the way they interact with their environment. We are finally beginning to take care of our earth, our home, after years of neglect,” said Sen. Svensson. This bill will decrease the pollution created by plastic-petroleum based bags in the state. Washington state businesses will be required to stop providing their customers with shopping bags made from this material. Failure to comply with this law will result in businesses being fined \$10,000 at the end of every calendar year that they provide the bags.



Healthcare reform for all

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Mustafa Abid introduced House Bill 1111, which addresses the issue of healthcare access. “The bill is a good one because it will begin the process of providing every state citizen with basic healthcare,” said Rep. Abid. Many Americans are going without medical attention because insurance and doctor visits are becoming more expensive. “For those without insurance, a relatively minor illness or injury can be a financial disaster,” said Rep. Abid. Should this bill become law, a healthcare commission will be established to make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature for enacting a comprehensive health care plan for all citizens.

Shortening school week will cut costs

Olympia – House Bill 2293 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Kayla Hanscom, Katherine Frank and Abbie



Younkin. “This bill addresses the issue of school costs, and could save \$1.1 billion annually,” said Rep. Younkin. This bill will allow school districts to hold classes only four days per week, while retaining the 1,000 contact hours for students and teachers. With

this plan buses will only be used four days a week instead of five, and utilities can be turned off on the longer 3-day weekends. Janitorial costs would decrease because the custodians would only be needed four days a week.

Guest speakers visit Page School

Sen. Mark Schoesler (R-9th), Justice Mary Fairhurst, Rep. Rueven Carlyle (D-36th) and Senate Counsel Mike Hoover joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker’s questions.



Reps try to overturn I-1000

Olympia – House Bill 1333 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Rubi Jimenez and Yolanda Jimenez. “This bill addresses the issue of the recently passed ‘Death with Dignity’ initiative and will prevent terminally ill patients from opting for suicide to end their lives,” said Rep. Rubi Jimenez. This bill will repeal I-1000. Many insurance companies will not pay for



expensive and experimental medicine to keep patients alive, but they will pay for the less expensive overdose drugs that doctors can now prescribe because of the initiative passing last November. This practice has the potential to encourage those who want

to prolong their lives from ending them instead. “This is not right,” said Rep. Yolanda Jimenez.

Capital punishment receives a death blow

Olympia – House Bill 1213 was introduced yesterday by Representative Margaret Chambers. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will provide a more humane and just punishment for the worst of the worst,” said Rep. Chambers. Many citizens believe that the death penalty violates the 8th amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishments in many ways. “The drug mixture used in lethal injections could cause the prisoner unnecessary pain and hanging can cause decapitation,” said Rep. Chambers. If bill 1213 is passed, the death penalty will be abolished, and felons found guilty of aggravated murder and other heinous crimes will be sentenced to life in prison.

Senate tries to balance budget

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Miranda Sita, Sierra Morris, Kali LeFebre, Brianna Ross, Alexandra Bisson, Nick Hutchinson, Dana Breseman, Connor Martin, Cole Schilling, Leah Freeborn and Parker Giebelhaus met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Sen. Freeborn. Among the suggested items slated for a tax in-



crease were cigarettes, soda pop, and liquor. Several senators called for a 5 cent tax on pop and a 50 cent cigarette tax. “The increase in the price of a pack of cig-

arettes is relatively insignificant, and unfortunately many smokers are addicted to the nicotine, so they will still continue to buy them. This tax will raise \$206 million,” said Sen. Hutchinson. Other proposals included cuts in goods and services in all government sectors by 1/4. “There is a lot of waste that we could eliminate,” said Sen. Breseman. “During this budget crisis, the citizens have been forced to cut back in their own lives. The government can set a positive example for our citizens by doing this and we’ll save \$200 million.” In addition, Sen. Giebelhaus suggested ending state capitol campus tours to save \$616,000, and Sen. LeFebre advocated cutting the class size reduction money to save \$140 million. “Cutting class sizes is not a good use of our money. It will only make a difference in one student per class. If a teacher has to grade 34 papers versus 33, that is not much of a difference in work load,” said Sen. LeFebre.

Raising the state sales tax from 6.5 percent to 6.6 percent will bring in \$200 and will be a temporary fix to help the problem, according to Sen. Martin. “This won’t be a huge hit on Washington citizens. It is also fair because no person in Washington is excluded from

paying the tax.” A creative approach to raising money came from Sen. Sita who suggested following Oregon’s lead and giving citizens the opportunity to do-



nerate to the state coffers in order to reduce the shortfall. “It is low cost on the government’s part and provides pure profit,” she said. “By simply investing in a small marketing plan, proud citizens can do their part to help the state they live and work in.”

Senators in pro-life fight

Olympia – Senate Bill 5005 was introduced yesterday by Senators Sophie Wise, Grace Andrews, and Nickolena Milne-Cooper. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion restrictions and will to

save the lives of many unborn children,” said Sen. Milne-Cooper.



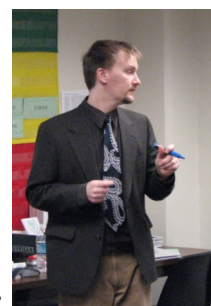
“Too many mothers are choosing to kill their babies. Our hope is that through this bill we can prohibit the abortion of the child when it is viable,” said Sen. Wise. If this law is passed, the state will require informed consent by all pregnant women, will require a parent’s consent for women under the age of 18 and will set the viability date at 25 weeks after conception. “Many other states have these restrictions, and we think our state should join them, for the sake of the mothers and their unborn children,” said Sen. Andrews.

Teachers passionate about civic education

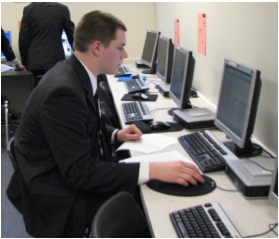


The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist. Judi is a retired social studies and English

teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students throughout Washington. “I really enjoy facilitating learning and watching those light bulbs go off each week,” said Matt, as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.



Vertefeuille pushes to allow concealed weapons on college campuses



Olympia – House Bill 1919 was introduced yesterday by Representative Chris Vertefeuille. “This bill addresses the issue of concealed weapons on college campuses and will let teachers and students defend themselves and others in the event of a shooting or other attack,” said Rep.

Vertefeuille. The infamous Virginia Tech Massacre was an unfortunate event that could have been prevented had someone else been able to use a firearm in self-defense, according to the representative. Virginia Tech and other college campuses around the country do not allow firearms on campus. This bill would change that for Washington colleges and universities. “The Washington State Constitution states that ‘The right of the individual citizen to bear arms in defense of himself, or the state, shall not be impaired...’ and it’s these rights that are denied on college campuses all over the state,” said Rep. Vertefeuille. Should the bill pass, students and teachers as well as other campus staff would be able to carry weapons if they have a concealed weapon permit. The goal is that school shootings such as the Virginia Tech Massacre won’t be repeated.

Page program over 100 years old



The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional..



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/. This newsletter has been posted there.